

## A CONSIDERATION OF THE WELFARE OF DEAF CHILDREN AND THE DUTY OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.

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Madam President of the National Congress of Mothers and Delegates to the National Congress on the Welfare of the Child:

Apart from the honor I feel in addressing such a representative and enthusiastic body as this assembly, I feel it a great pleasure in pleading for the welfare of deaf children. This subject was most near and dear to my father, Laurence Turnbull, M. D., whose life work was the practice and teaching of Otology. A specialty he, in the old time way, built out of a large general practice. At the commencement of his career he espoused the cause of teaching deaf children the so-called "oral method," particularly as advocated by the Misses Garrett of Philadelphia. In the first edition of Dr. Turnbull's work entitled, "Diseases of the Ear," he devoted a chapter to "deaf-mutism," which was a most comprehensive resume of this interesting subject. It recorded its history and the results of his large experience, detailed accounts of his visits to the schools of this country and abroad, and concluded with an impartial review of all known methods. as early as the year 1871, and he quoted the following italicized paragraph to illustrate Miss Garrett's method:\*

"Great results have already been gained through the Oral Method, and I have no doubt that greater and better results than any already obtained await us in the future, as the method becomes more widely and more strictly and intelligently applied. The oral pupil who has the least amount of intelligible speech and of lip reading compared with his fellow oral pupils, has just that much advantage over the most expert maker of arbitrary signs and the manual alphabet, which are sure to be as unintelligible to the general

public as our speech is to the sign maker.

<sup>\*</sup> Directions to Parents of Deaf Children. By Mary S. Garrett.

"The more perfect we can make the speech of the deaf, and the more skilful we can train them to be in lip reading, and the greater the amount of language we can teach them, the

happier and more independent they will be."

As a student I could not help but be impressed with my father's enthusiasm and grow up with a fondness for the subject we have under consideration, and you will, I know, excuse a pardonable pride and concede my deep interest as justified. My wish is to arouse a universal interest concerning the education of deaf children and ask your co-operation in the welfare of the deaf child whose early training from this time must be in visible speech in but one direction. I cannot help but feel a hesitancy in the simple statement of facts which it seems to me must sound commonplace to some of you, because I feel assured that everybody who has been interested for any length of time in the education and welfare of deaf children must already be familiar with the methods about which I want to tell you.

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Pantomime plays no part in the game of "speech imitation" we are to champion. Given a deaf child (infant) the first query suggests the all-important question "Is this or that infant deaf?" No! Emphatically no! Why not give it the benefit of the doubt, keep talking to it straight ahead, frown down anybody who instead of speaking at it, dares to make a sign. Perhaps it may only be "tongue-tied." rare condition, but popular! Perhaps the child has defective eyesight and does not see well enough to imitate speech. Perhaps the child has congenital occlusion, some foreign substance closes the auditory canals or scar tissue (cicatrices) in its throat. Perhaps the child has a so-called "cold" or influenza or gotten along to dentition time. Perhaps the child has adenoids with or without enlarged tonsils. (At this juncture permit me to pause and say that in the case of "mouth breathing children" our duty is almost as imperative as in the case of the deaf for obvious well known reasons.) Perhaps the child has recently suffered with some exanthematous disease. Perchance, it has acquired or inherited some, so-called, scrofulous disease. Many supposed reasons will suffice to make us doubt permanent deafness. Therefore, take it for granted that the child hears more or less and keep on talking to it. The organs of speech are ready and at your service. Keep up the fight, nothing daunted, because, if you do, the child's education has been started. The child is not necessarily dumb if it should be deaf! A child possessed with normal ears and hearing, who has never heard nor seen speech, will just as surely be dumb as the deaf child

who has never been trained to see or imitate speech.

In training a deaf child full faith must always be retained. Deception once practiced is fatal to discipline. When a child once loses faith or has been deceived it will dread strangers, especially the doctor, and all influence in the way of discipline will be lost. Firm discipline must always be maintained, not only for the good of the child but for the comfort of the parents or teacher, both in every instance being the undoubted gainers.

Satisfy yourself that it sees your face in a good light. Children are mimics. Encourage every effort to speak, and after a fair, patient trial always call your physician and if he is unable to assist you in solving the question, "Is the child deaf?" special counsel must be called to solve the questions

I have suggested, and secure intelligent advice.

All deaf children with good eyesight can, with extremely rare exceptions, and ought to be taught to talk and can learn speech reading, provided their parents, care-takers and teachers know how to guide and instruct them. When parents discover an infant to be deaf, they should continue to talk to it, just as every mother does a hearing baby when it is learning to talk; she does not use motions to it because it has not yet commenced to understand her language, but she repeats over and over again, to it, the pet names she calls it, tells it again and again to "say papa," "say ma-ma," etc., etc., until it learns to understand and then to imitate her words. She is keen to discover, encourage and correct its first attempts at articulation.

The child should be strictly trained to depend entirely upon speech reading and that alone, and everyone with whom a deaf child comes in contact should talk at it, i. e., to it; and encourage and aid it to articulate. Deaf babies begin to say "ma-ma" just as hearing babies do, but as a rule it is not encouraged. If it were and the child properly guided to further articulation, it would soon talk and evince every

sympton of joy and delight.

The Hon. John Hitz, Superintendent of the Volta Bureau, says: "The fact is well established that defective auditory organs are distinct and as independent from those of speech as they are from those of vision, and if people in general knew that they would more likely disassociate the organs of speech from those of hearing as fully as they generally do the defects of sight from those of speech, and realize that if properly taught the deaf would organically as readily be able to speak as are the blind."

Director Frederick Werner, of Stade, Germany, says: "Develop speech in the deaf child in such a way that his THINK-ING may as soon as possible be based upon his speech sensations." Thus formulated we have a fundamental principle in which is found "the long needed and sought for psychological"

basis of the oral method."

For instance, a case on record where a mother, finding her boy of two years old did not talk, and after having been told by a physician that he was totally deaf, talked to him constantly, knowing nothing of *methods*. She treated him and talked to him as a normal child, with the result that he not only has a natural voice, but is also in every other way, except hearing, a natural child. He is now five years and five months of age, and is able to read speech from the lips of strangers. This boy's clever mother stated nothing angered her more than to see any one use motions in talking to her child.

Another case well known to Miss Garrett was that of a girl who was about nine years old when she was discovered. She was a so-called "deaf-mute," whose parents had always been wise enough to talk to her (at her) from infancy. She understood speech, talked and was able to take part in all ordinary conversation.

It is unnecessary for me to say how profligate it is of caretakers of the human body to neglect physical development. In these days of athletics and the strenuous life, it is almost an insult to any intelligent person to suggest that unless a muscle be used and put to work it will waste, atrophy and soon be useless. This is, alas! too frequently and painfully evident in cases of neglected injuries and fractures of the limbs, etc., which have been put up in splints or plaster, and have been allowed to remain without any motion until such time as the dressings were removed. Many a limb in such neglected cases hangs stiff and useless for want of proper care, of massage, friction and passive motion—in short, exercise. Why should we not expect the same to occur in the muscles of the organs of speech? Unless developed and put

to use they degenerate.

The oculist has no difficulty in convincing the parent of a "cross-eyed child," that simple lack of use of the deviating eye is the cause of every case of squint. If one of a pair of eyes is not good enough for associate use with its fellow, "Nature" abandons it, sets it in or out, and keeps it there, out of the way, so that a blurred or indistinct image does not embarrass that of the better fellow-eye. If one of a pair of eyes be sightless there is nothing to hold it in place on account of lack of fixation and the stronger of the two muscles pulls it in or out. Nature knows better than to attempt to fuse a blurred or indistinct image with a good one. Correctly fit and adjust spectacles, and the unused weak eye, with its undeveloped muscles, at first refuses to work with its fellow; although later, when properly corrected, this once poorer eye works equally well. Hence the necessity for putting infants' eyes in order and at work, exercising the muscles at once.

A further consideration of the welfare of deaf children brings the student to a study of the laws of inheritance, heredity and consanguinity. Here is an awful pause! such a student be a medical man and the added consideration of the diseases which cause deafness be recognized as another factor which might have aided in the actual foundation of a deaf-variety of the human race, we of the medical profession must be up and doing, lest forgetful of the Hippocratic oath we be charged with neglect of duty. We have the important duty of guiding and instructing parents of deaf infants and children. Pause and reflect a moment when I tell you that one child is deaf out of every fifteen hundred. Dr. Alexander Graham Bell tells us that over fifty per cent. of twenty-two hundred and sixty-two congenital deaf-mutes had deaf-mute relatives and even thirteen per cent. of the deaf from other (accidental) causes had deaf relatives.

The family physician, autocrat as he doubtless is, can wield a tremendous influence with his adoring families of

patients. It is the duty of the medical profession to prevent, if for hygienic reasons, the segregation, as a class, of any and all children, much more so of deaf children, who must be brought up under the environment of homes or in its home. We must retain normal environment as nearly as possible during the period of education. If children must leave home for special training, let it be at an age when they would ordinarily commence to talk. There is no sense so variable in its development as speech. Some children begin to talk at twelve to eighteen months, others not until after the second year. Some pronounce distinctly at three years and others not until nine or ten.

C. G. Pearse, Superintendent of Schools, Milwaukee, Wis.,

says:

"A great hindrance in the teaching of deaf children has been the fact that they began to learn language and speech when they came to school, several years after normal children acquire these accomplishments. For this reason they are likely to master these arts less perfectly, and to be later in getting an elementary education than our normal children. For a few years a departure in Pennsylvania, "The Home for Training Deaf Children in Speech Before They are of School Age," Philadelphia, has attracted marked attention. Into this school deaf children are taken for instruction at age when normal children are learning language and speech at home. Experience here has shown that deaf children may in effect be almost as well grounded in language and speech by the time they reach the usual school age, as are their more fortunate mates who have all their senses. lessons taught by this school are not unlikely to prove the greatest step forward in the teaching of deaf children that has been taken since oral teaching was established."

"The public schools should stand anxious to increase the scope of their usefulness, and become so far as they may, to all the children of the state, the door of opportunity, as they now are to all the normal children of the State. That we should so order our system of public education that we may care not only for the normal, but the great majority of those who depart from the normal type, either through lack of some bodily power or sense, such as sight, or hearing, or through some intellectual lack, where that lack is not such

That our search in this direction should not cease until we have brought within the magic circle of our people's schools all the classes of defective or attypical children, except those unfitted by their misfortune to lead self-controlled, self-directed and self-supporting lives; and have made it possible, in these schools, for them to receive the special care and special educational facilities which they require, while at the same time remaining in their homes in the care of father and mother, in the companionship of brothers and sisters, approaching more and more nearly, as their educational years pass by, to the normal type of the society in which they must take their places, tending less and less to become members of a class apart, unseeking and unsought by their normal fellow man."

Mr. William Nelson, Headmaster of the Royal Schools for the Deaf and Dumb, Old Trafford, Manchester, England, on a visit of inquiry to schools for the Deaf in the United States of America, writes at length of "The Home for the Training in Speech of Deaf Children Before They are of School Age." He says: "This is the school which has excited my interest for some years, as its aims and methods were so entirely new, that I believe very few teachers in England credited the accounts that had been given of it.

It is composed of two detached villa residences, and stands in the middle of the fine park just outside of Philadelphia.

Its object is described in the following words by the Principal, Miss Garrett: "The fact that all deaf children, after leaving school, must live their lives and earn their living among hearing people, and that heretofore so little has been done toward training them until they were of school age, had induced us to try teaching them to talk as nearly as possible at the natural age, and then sending them to be educated with hearing people, among whom, as before said, they must live their later lives."

The children are received at the age of two and up to eight years old, but the earlier the better after they have reached the age of two years. Their attention is constantly directed to the lips of everybody who comes in contact with them, from the lowest servant in the place to the head of the school, and whatever they are doing, all through the day, becomes a constant lesson in speech and language and lip-reading. Absolutely no signing is allowed. All this is done under the most happy and delightful conditions. Although the children, many of them, come from the very poorest homes, they are dressed and fed and treated from the first like little ladies and gentlemen, and they play about in these two beautiful little villas, as happy and well cared-for children do in our best English homes. The whole feeling of the place is delightfully nice and simple, and directed towards the object they have in view, namely, the humanizing and edu-

cating of these little children.

My first introduction to them was at dinner, and this I want to describe fully. The children were seated in groups, around small tables for eight or ten, with a couple of teachers or more at each table, and a constant chatter was kept up during the whole meal, in the most natural way possible. This was really school in disguise, education around a centre of interest, which could not fail to produce attention and good results. I was asked by quite small children, if I would like any bread, or any salt, or a glass of water, and where I came from and whether I liked America. They told me that Miss Garrett had been in England last year, and numerous other things, such as might be said by ordinary hearing children at the table. The whole thing surprised me very much, as I had quite expected to find that the accounts of this method of instruction had been exaggerated.

Miss Garrett does not teach abstract articulation, but commences at once to teach speech, and in the lowest class, with quite baby children of four years of age, such questions as "Who cut your hair?" and "What did the barber do?" and so on were asked and answered quite readily in amazingly natural speech. All through the school this method of instilling the language of early childhood is followed; the greatest possible freedom is allowed, and no series of set lessons or time tables is adhered to. I spent two days in examining and looking into the working of this delightful school, and the impression I got was that it was on the right lines undoubtedly, if the aim of deaf-mute education is to give speech and lip-reading in such a natural way as will readily be accepted and understood by the general public. Miss Garrett, in order that I might follow up her idea, that after the lan-

guage difficulty had been solved for the deaf, and natural everyday speech given, that they should be transferred to ordinary schools for the purposes of education proper, very kindly invited a number of her old pupils to meet me at supper next evening. The boy who sat next to me was at a grammar school, and he told me he was intending to be an engineer. They were all doing exceedingly well at school, as their reports plainly showed, and as I could readily understand from their fluency and accuracy in the use of everyday speech. I had the pleasure of giving them a short lesson after supper on some birds' eggs, which some of them had brought. They were easy to teach, and, what is very unusual with many of the orally-taught deaf, the work could proceed quite rapidly.

One of the secrets of this success is no doubt due to the fact that the children never go home for holidays during the first six years of instruction, which means that the continuity of speech training is unbroken. I have no doubt the advantage of that is quite clear to all teachers, who have experienced the disastrous results of a long holiday away from school, often in a wretched home, where the influences are entirely opposed to all that goes on in school. This is one of Miss Garrett's strong points, and it shows with what pertinacity she has carried out her ideas and fought the question through in order to secure her ends, both in legislation, with

the parents, and, unfortunately, with teachers.

I believe that the influence of this one school in America will count for much in the future. It is already beginning to tell, and there are signs in many of the larger schools that fresh ideas and new thoughts are in the air in regard to the teaching of the deaf. What strikes me, is that with the present attitude of the "powers that be" in our own country, it would be impossible to drop a lump of leaven like this into our midst at the expense of the State. This elasticity applies not only to Miss Garrett's school in America, but to all schools that I saw. Freedom to teach is given to the school by the State, and freedom to invent, and adopt, and try new methods, is given to the teachers in the schools. Mistakes are made, but the general gain is greater than the loss, and the deaf schools in America in this respect honestly reflect the general national spirit which allows the apprentice at the

bench to "have his say," and to use his mind in everything that touches his work. Fault-finding is not one of the signs of State control in America. The money is freely given and freely expended in order that the utmost may be done for the children it is intended to benefit.

The general attitude of the Inspectors and the State department is one of sympathetic encouragement, and the teachers on the visit of the Inspectors, go on with their work with confidence. The rise of such splendid work as Miss Garrett's is the outcome of this remarkable sympathy on

the part of the State."

When considering consanguinity, Dr. Alexander Graham Bell\* says, in his more than interesting and valuable article on Eugenics: "If there are any conditions under which consanguineous unions would be a benefit to man they should be made known so as to enable us to understand certainly what conditions are beneficial and what harmful to the end that public opinion may be rightly guided in its treatment of this important subject. We have statistics which indicate very clearly that consanguineous unions should not be contracted by defective persons, and the results obtained by Dr. E. A. Fay are specially significant in this connection. He shows that there is a considerable liability to the production of deaf offspring where a deaf mute marries a blood relative even in cases where the original deafness was not congenital. The statistics of the twelfth census of the United States show that at least 4.5 per cent. of the deaf of the country and 4.5 per cent. of the blind are offspring of consanguineous marriages, but we do not know conclusively whether consanguinity in the parents produces the defective condition or whether it simply intensifies a pre-existing tendency in the family. The largest percentage of children of cousins marriages are found among the deaf who have deaf relatives (8.8 per cent.) and among the blind (9.5 per cent.) who have blind relatives."

"If it be true that 'the proper study of man is man' no higher or nobler subject of research can be found. The improvement of the human race depends largely upon two great factors, heredity and environment: and we deal chiefly with the question of heredity.

<sup>\*</sup>A Few Thoughts Concerning Eugenics. The National Geographic Magazine, February, 1908.

"The institution of marriage not only provides for the production of offspring but for the production of morality in the community at large. This is a powerful reason why we should not interfere with it any more than possibly can be helped. There are other reasons, however, arising from a consideration of the rights possessed by individuals in a free

community."

I wish in this connection to draw your attention to the marked effects of voice culture in throat troubles and deafness. In the latter case pronounced benefit seems almost invariable by means of vocal vibration of the parts through specially evolved exercises, for the chest, posterior portion of the throat, tongue and lips. Every child is receiving a certain amount of voice culture at Miss Garrett's Home. The advanced classes already show marked improvement, not only in their voices but in their manner of speaking,

promptness of response being particularly noticeable.

Miss M. S. Zane, who is devoting particular attention to this special branch, tells me: In a comparatively short time she found not only a marked improvement in articulation, but that the child even showed an appreciation of the fact that they had found another source of relief. Even in the classes of very young children, as all classes are receiving this training, they are eager for this exercise, which is another proof that it is quite natural for deaf children to use their voices and that they do appreciate every effort that tends toward making them like other children. It is an understood fact that all organs and members of the body should be put in their normal condition, performing their natural functions; and only when this is accomplished are we the happier. Then why, because the child has been deprived of one faculty, should we permit it to be deprived of the use of others.

Industrial Training: In our endeavor to follow the lines endorsed by leading educators, we have, with several backward boys in the Home, given them the special training for learning speech and language, and then advised industrial training among the hearing, instead of sending them to ordinary schools, which is our general custom. The industrial results have been as successful as with the children who are not mentally backward and the pupils' mental deficiencies have been lessened. We train the hands of all the

children, however, young, in accuracy, beginning with folding their table bibs evenly, etc. As soon as they are at all old enough they go to the sloyd room and lay, under a male teacher, foundations for their later industrial training. In their lessons there we seek to discover and encourage the natural bent of each individual child.

Physical Training: Neither the Sloyd Teacher nor the Teacher of Physical Training at the Home have had any special training for teaching the deaf, but teach just as they

do hearing classes in schools.

Sir William Wilde, whose work on "Aural Surgery," reads more like a novel than a text-book, pays a touching tribute to teachers of the deaf children. In his forcible style, he

says:

"For wealth, men have risked their salvation; for fame, men have periled their existence; for religion or enthusiasm, men have died at the stake;—the miser or the murderer saw, however, the golden glare of riches beyond the gulf of crime; the warrior felt already the laurel on his brow, and heard the shout of his welcoming country-men as he sought the thickest of the fray;—but to me it has always appeared that the patient instructor of the deaf deserved a reward which nothing earthly could bestow. And the energy, perseverance, and philanthropy of those good women and men who have from time to time undertaken in different countries that herculean task of teaching the eye to hear, have only been equalled by the eloquence of those who have advocated the claims which the deaf have upon all to whom the Creator has afforded the blessing of speech and hearing."—(Wildes' Aural Surgery, Am. Edition, Addinell Hewson, 1853.)